



Materials for Training - Bulgaria (see BG-Training Module)

Three Manifestations of Integration: Turks, Roma and Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks)

1. Conceptions and specifications

1.1 Integration (A 1)

At first it is necessary to define what does integration of ethnos-social group mean, especially in a plural community. It should be noted that integration:

a) has ideal purpose, which should assure:

- a good chance of education, and personal and professional realisation. Besides, the integration is specified by language, custom and religious tolerance.
- the everyday life of all these ethno-social groups should be specified by circumstances of understanding, trust and mutual co-operation.

The following measures are needed to define the specification of the ideal purpose:

b) actual integration efforts and failures

- Are there social-politic measures and prescriptions, which surmount social-economic differences, for instance at school, at work, in social life?
- Do any conscious or spontaneous attack on the persons from different ethno-social groups occur? What is the social pressure in the difference groups?

1.2 Subjects of integration (A 1.1; A 1.1.2)

a) If we assume that Bulgaria is a state where the ethnic, linguistic and religious groups have equal rights and a chance of integration, then the civil society should take care of the minorities, so :

b) subjects and initiators of integration, generally speaking, are the state and the civil society.

c) Besides, the integration insists on inter-subjective and humane behaviour, so it is always relation between subject and object.

1.3 Examples for low measures and politic efforts about integration. They should counteract against the politic fragmentation of the community, but in fact they lead to it:

- Advantages for those in possession of Bulgarian citizenship on the basis of origin – „Persons of Bulgarian origin“ (Const. 25, 2)

- Eastern Orthodox Christianity is designated in the constitution as the traditional religious denomination (13,3); free religious practice (13, 1); separation of church and state (13, 2)
- Ban on ethnic, religious and racist political parties (11,4) through a declared political pluralism (11, 1)
- Civil (professional) unions (12, 2) are not to pursue political goals nor to perform activities once they have been designated the right to represent and protect the interests of the citizens (12, 1)
- Integration as a formal and real ethnic assimilation of quasi-minorities (historical examples)

- formal integration instead of a actual assimilation of the quasi-minorities (B 1.1). (These are: a) minorities, which are different from the majority by customs, but they don't show specific social difference in comparison with the majority; b) minorities, which are majorities in some regions and behave like majorities. And this is already a condition for separatism).

2. The problem of the self-identification and public recognition (A 2).

Sometimes it is difficult to distinct the minority from the majority in the most Balkan nations, because of a) the conscious self-identification of each person and b) the external determination of the ethno-social group and its members.

For example, 86-95% of the population is defined by family, religion and membership to some kind of group, but the actual public recognition is 65-74%. The difference is not so large regarding the language – the self-identification and the external determination are almost equal – 85-86%, which means that the language is the strongest component.

The self-identification by nation and country is about 65-86%. Graph. A 2 shows different numbers depending on the criteria of different organisations. There are many hesitations, when referring to Roma, because they could not be defined clearly. The most important components for defining are names, religion and language. In addition, some people, who define themselves as Bulgarians or Turks, are defined as Roma by the Bulgarian or Turkish population and consequently they are isolated.

Map 1 shows the geographic distribution of the ethnic-groups; map 2 shows the Roma schools with more than 50% Roma.

2.1 Different levels of self- identification

Graph. A 2.1 shows that the Turks are defined by names, language, religion and ethnic self-identification. This explains why the Bulgarian Turks have a dual attitude regarding the definition of their nationality, or feel low or formal affiliation towards the Bulgarian state. For many of them, the national state, understanding the word in ethnic sense, is Turkey.

The Roma define their identity through names, language and self-identification, which includes own specific elements, and, respectively for Christian and for Muslim Roma,



Bulgarian- Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as the Turkish language and religious elements. The idea of independent country does not appear among the Roma people.

The levels of self- identification for the Pomaks are close to the Roma. The language has an important role. Because of this, and because of a small size of the population, this is the group with the smallest level of integration and the appropriate chances.

3. The difference between wish and reality of the integration

- The perfect field for the integration is the working sphere. The access to the places of work which allows higher standard of living is exceptionally important for integration. Traditionally, certain types of work are associated with certain ethnic groups.
- Ideally, the education could assist the fusion of religious outlook. In fact it helps preserving “the own truths”.
- The daily interaction between the members of different groups always demands mutual “crossing of the frontier”. In fact the daily life of different groups in the country passes independently and individually.

4. Basic factors preventing the integration (B)

4.1 Poverty and unemployment

Bulgaria is one of the poorest countries in Europe: almost 22% of the population of the country lives under the poverty line. Almost 84% of the Roma live in poverty, living on average with one Euro per day. Their integration possibilities are reduced to minimum due to the exceptional poverty (B 2)

The reason for this poverty is the high percent of the unemployed, which is 35 to 50% among the Roma and 25 to 35% among the Turks. Most of the unemployed live in villages and small towns. In Sofia the unemployment is only 3- 4%, while the average for the country is about 11% (B 3.1).

4.2 The low level of education among the minorities (B 3.2)

The age range for the elementary education in Bulgaria is from 6-7 to 10-11 (or 1-4 class). The primary education is between the ages of 10-11 and 14-15 (or 5-8 class), secondary education between the ages of 14-15 to 18-19 (or 9-12/13 class). The education is obligatory until the age of 16.

The difference between educational levels for the different groups in the country is considerable. For instance almost 65% of the Turks have only elementary education and most of them - primary education; 27% have secondary education and only 3% have graduated from the university. Almost 5% are illiterate.

Most of the Roma are going to elementary schools and some of them go to primary ones. About 18% of them have completed secondary schools. Only 1% have graduated from universities. The illiteracy rates among them are more than 13%.

22% of the Bulgarian population has studied in an elementary and primary schools. About 54% have completed their secondary education; 22% graduated from universities; the illiterate Bulgarians are between 1 and 2%.

The educational potential for integration is higher in the secondary schools, but the lack of resources and interest on the part of the parents for the education of their children are a very serious obstacle for the integration.

The real segregation at schools is an obstacle for the integration, too; most of the Turkish students are concentrated in about 120 primary schools and 34 secondary ones; the Roma are studying in about 350 primary schools and 17 secondary ones. More than 85% of the students that attend auxiliary schools, orphanages and reformatory schools are Roma.

Here are the big differences between Roma, Turks and the other parts of the population. The Bulgarians and the Bulgarian-Muslims have the same education and the same indexes in their professional realisation. In this sense, the Bulgarian-Muslims are not an object of integration and could be included to the Bulgarian population in further comparisons.

4.3 The social distance in the daily behaviour of different groups

Graph 202/6 shows, that there are big divisions between the different groups in Bulgaria and the main reason for this is the rejection of the other.

For instance, 77% of the Bulgarians would not marry a Roma. The same refers to the Turks. Against marriages between Bulgarians and Turks are only 54% of the Bulgarians. 48% of the Turks are inclined to marry a Bulgarian.

The friendship between Bulgarians and Roma is accepted by 86% of the Roma and 74% of the Bulgarians. The social distance between Turks and Roma is bigger than the one among Turks and Bulgarians.

In all cases the Roma are more inclined to accept the Bulgarians and the Turks. It is easy to notice that the increase in the social distance between Bulgarians and Turks on the one hand and Roma on the other, lead to a barrier in the daily behaviour. As a result of this follows the strong ghettoising of the Roma especially those living in the cities.

In the end of 20th century the communist government tried to “Bulgarianize” by violence the Turkish population in Bulgaria. This internal policy made almost 350 000 Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin leave the country and settle in Turkey. After the political changes in 1989 this policy was terminated. Under the conditions of Bulgaria’s accession to EU many Turks are coming back to this country having a double citizenship.



5. Hypothesis

The integration of the Turks in the Bulgarian community will probably continue by expanding of their political representation in the public institutions and by their civil associations. It is difficult to speak about integration, which could erase all differences, but in some regions the Turkish population is an absolute majority and has the leading role among the local authorities, education and religious life. Under some circumstances there is even a possibility of aspiration towards autonomy.

The integration of Roma is extremely problematic. The elite among the Roma is using for definite purposes the low education and the high unemployment rates among the Gypsy population. Lately, there are sharp political reactions in Bulgaria provoked by the increased nationalism against the Roma. The political efforts for the integration of the Roma are assessed in different ways by the Bulgarian people. Over 38% of them think that the problems with the Roma could be solved if they decide to emigrate. Graph Gs 202/7 shows that 1/3 of the Bulgarian population does not allow Roma burials in Bulgarian cemeteries.

The relatively small group of Bulgarian-Muslims has been integrated for many years and it is really hard to distinguish this community from the majority of the population except by the religious differences. These differences were never a leading factor for the existing tolerance among the different groups in Bulgaria

Most of the general difficulties that have appeared, while Bulgaria is changing into an ethnically "homogeneous national country", will lose their sense, when the country becomes a part of the EU, and when it will be a part of an ethnic and religious varied union. In any case the problems of the social and economic distance between different groups will be changed when the economic situation of the country changes and all groups in this country have a free access to all educational and professional levels.